



Holy Lights Human Rights
Gunter Hampel/Cavana Lee Hampel/Steve Swell
(Birth)
 by John Sharpe

Recorded in the WKCR studio, *Holy Lights Human Rights* is but the latest installment of German multi-instrumentalist Gunter Hampel's work to be captured by the radio station. Three of the first ten issues on his Birth label were recorded there in the '60s-70s and he has been back many times since. Joining him on this occasion are his daughter Cavana Lee Hampel, whose wordless singing becomes one of the defining characteristics of the set, and Downtown trombone stalwart Steve Swell.

The unconventional lineup proves no barrier to adventurous music-making. Hampel restricts himself to flute and vibraphone, which helps reinforce the airy dreamy ambience. Lee Hampel's playful vocalese brings to mind her mother, the great Jeanne Lee, particularly her mix of floating exhalations and surrations. Hampel alternates between melodic lines and meter and tonal exploration on flute while he often takes a more percussive angular approach on vibraphone. Swell shows his tender side, relatively restrained, creating a loose obbligato around the voice, blending and harmonizing with the other instruments.

Hampel's gently swinging themes provide the launchpad for lots of freewheeling, relaxed but intricate exchanges. "Magic Touch" gets the album off to a splendid start, as flute and trombone dance around the pulse implied by Lee Hampel's breathy rhythmic scat, before opening into fluid three-way dialogue. The gradual alignment of the disparate strands into a restatement of Hampel's loping tune makes for a captivating conclusion to the track. "Danilo Waltz" forms a soothing lullaby, delineated by warm trombone and buoyed by bristling vibraphone, while the series of boppish descending phrases that open "Smiling Energy" announce another flowing Hampel chart and a further dose of inventive but understated colloquy. Indeed such is their strength that the final two cuts, which sound spontaneous, might have benefited from more overt focus from Hampel's pen.

For more information, visit gunterhampelmusic.de. Swell is at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center Jun. 2nd, 9th and 23rd and Roulette Jun. 11th with Charles Gayle and 13th with Jemeel Moondoc as part of Vision Festival. See Calendar.



Ironic Havoc
Paul Flaherty/Randall Colbourne (Relative Pitch)
 by Brad Cohan

This reviewer's introduction to saxophone giant Paul Flaherty came by way of former Sonic Youth luminary Thurston Moore. As a fellow Massachusetts avant-gardist, Moore used his clout to help give Flaherty a wider platform for his monolithic craft.

Thus began my fandom of Flaherty, with 2006's

A Rock in the Snow (Important), a trio with violinist C. Spencer Yeh and drummer Chris Corsano, 2008's solo jaunt *Whirl of Nothingness* (Family Vineyard) and *Bridge Out!* (Family Vineyard), an album with devoted conspirator drummer Randall Colbourne.

Flaherty steadfastly continues to build rapport with like-minded flame-throwers like Weasel Walter, Marc Edwards and Steve Swell but it's the duo he shares with Colbourne that is his ultimate vehicle. A union that goes back to 1990 and encompasses up to 40 recording sessions, *Ironic Havoc* is yet another example of their chemistry. With an aesthetic mirroring his shamanistic presence of flowing white beard and bald pate, Flaherty—channeling Albert Ayler and Peter Brötzmann—proves part hurricane-force squealer and part-discharger of subtle nuances. Colbourne, like the late Rashied Ali, is an unrelenting percussive force bustling with an arsenal of gnashes and massages.

Ironic Havoc's six compositions are epic in proportion, ranging from the shortest at nearly 9 minutes to its heftiest eclipsing 17, running the gamut from assaultive to delicately restrained to all-out soulful. Opener "Jumping Spiders" attains a funky vibe as the ever-electric Flaherty furiously hops from scream-bloody-murder wails and gyrating grooves to bluesy flourishes. "Revenge of the Roadkill" is a slow-building tour de force of sonic meditations, which quickly descends into thwacking fury and discordant swells. Aptly-titled marathon closer "Conclusion" constructs violent soundscapes laden with mettle and emotion. With *Ironic Havoc*, Flaherty and Colbourne continue their quest for violent and spiritual improvisation of the highest order.

For more information, visit relativepitchrecords.com. Flaherty is at Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center Jun. 2nd and Ibeam Brooklyn Jun. 20th. See Calendar.



AfroPhysicist
Theo Croker (Okeh)
 by Alex Henderson

Theo Croker, a grandson of the late Doc Cheatham, followed in his footsteps when he became a jazz trumpeter. But *AfroPhysicist* is a long way from the swing and Dixieland for which Cheatham is remembered. This album is dominated by electric jazz-funk and soul jazz and Croker's playing recalls Donald Byrd, Freddie Hubbard and Miles Davis.

Most of the material on *AfroPhysicist* (which Croker produced with veteran singer Dee Dee Bridgewater) is accessible and groove-oriented. "Realize" sounds like a cross between electric Davis and Parliament/Funkadelic and Croker is equally R&B-minded on "Wanting Your Love", "It's Not You, It's Me (But You Didn't Help)" and a memorable arrangement of Stevie Wonder's "Visions". Croker makes a detour into straightahead postbop on the angular and cerebral "The Fundamentals", but more often than not the soul/funk factor is dominant.

AfroPhysicist offers some vocals here and there, most notably on the three tracks that feature Bridgewater: Buddy Johnson's "Save Your Love for Me", Michael Jackson-associated "I Can't Help It" and Eddie Jefferson's "Moody's Mood for Love". The big-voiced Bridgewater is perfect for *AfroPhysicist* because she has both jazz and R&B credits on her long résumé and her expressive performances on this album successfully combine the two styles. Croker's take on

"Moody's Mood for Love" is certainly unorthodox. The song (which came about when Jefferson wrote lyrics for saxophonist James Moody's instrumental 1949 arrangement of the Dorothy Fields-Jimmy McHugh standard "I'm in the Mood for Love") has usually been performed as a male/female vocal duet but here Croker performs alongside Bridgewater with his trumpet as the male part.

Not for jazz purists, *AfroPhysicist* is strictly for those who like their jazz laced with big doses of R&B.

For more information, visit okeh-records.com. Croker is at Kaye Playhouse Jun. 9th with Dee Dee Bridgewater as part of Blue Note Jazz Festival. See Calendar.

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